

# Michigan United Conservation Clubs

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To: Chairman Mike Simpson and members of the House Agriculture Committee

Written Testimony: Gregory K Peter MS, DVM Chelsea Michigan – member of the Michigan Feral Swine Working Group and Wildlife Disease Policy Advisor to Michigan United Conservation Clubs

If we could have eradicated an invasive species problem like zebra mussels early in the infestation – wouldn't we have wanted to do so? Millions of dollars of damage have resulted from their introduction and many other states in the USA can attest to how damaging feral swine can be. By comparison, the zebra mussel is relatively benign. Texas last year estimated over \$60 million damage to property alone – not to mention neither the environmental damage nor the threat to agricultural industry. The important message I would like to convey to our legislators is that we begin to regard feral swine and European wild boar, in particular, as an invasive species problem – just like zebra mussels.

The husbandry of such a potentially destructive and dangerous species to benefit a VERY few Michigan breeders is extremely shortsighted and ill-advised. The Natural Resources Commission and the Agriculture Commission passed a Joint Resolution #12 (see below) over two years ago stating that a desirable position would be the prohibition of such a practice. Wisconsin has recently done so - <http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/43435592.html>. It is about time we follow suit here in Michigan and take decisive action to shut off the "faucet" which supplies the escapees into the wild. Demographic and topological evidence is irrefutable that the source of the wild boar infestation is the escape from facilities that are breeding wild boar – a practice that should be prohibited under Michigan law in accordance with the resolution of our advisory governmental bodies.

The alternative would be a quagmire of regulation and with little funding to pursue enforcement, the result would be an ineffectual effort. The reproductive capability of this invasive, exotic species will defeat any attempt to eradicate this problem in the absence of compliance with resolution D. With further delay, this rapidly growing population will reach an endemic level. The regulation cost of such a small industry would be out of proportion to the possible benefit of retaining the industry. Not to mention the lack of funds to do so. There are more important issues for state agencies to expend the few dollars they have. The best way to eliminate swine outside of enclosures is to turn off the supply completely - not regulate it to a trickle.

I attended a national conference on feral swine last spring in St. Louis, Missouri and I have appended three general conclusions below from an executive digest I wrote. The most important conclusion, I believe, relates to the potential of disease problems that feral swine can harbor. In many places these animals are infected with zoonotic diseases (that which humans can contract). In addition, and potentially very economically damaging, they threaten the livestock industry in our state. Recently, three wild boar herds that have been destroyed because they were positive for Pseudorabies, a disease Michigan swine industry has been free of since the early